



Assessment Notes...

From the Standards and Assessment Division

August 23, 2002

Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program

Internet Release of 2002 STAR Results

The 2002 STAR results will be publicly released on the Internet at 10 a.m. on Thursday, August 29. District/county superintendents will receive a secure Web site address and password on Monday, August 26, so that they can designate someone to verify that the district or county data on the Web site match the district or county reports. Information about the data to verify will be faxed to superintendents. If district/county STAR coordinators are responsible for verifying the information being posted, they should get the Web site address, password, directions for reviewing the Internet reports and reporting discrepancies to the CDE from their superintendent.

The person designated to verify the district Internet Reports is to verify that all district schools are included. They are then to verify that the following match the data on the district or county California Standards Test School Lists with Summary, the Stanford 9 Mixed-T Administrators Data Summary, or Master List Summary and the Analysis of Variables Reports:

- the number of students enrolled is correct (This is the number of answer documents each school submitted for all tested and non-tested students.)
- the number of students tested and the scores reported are correct
- the number of males and females tested and the scores are correct
- the number of English learners tested and the scores are correct
- the number of economically disadvantaged students and the scores are correct
- the number of special education students and the scores are correct

STAR Data Verification for API Calculations

STAR coordinators will receive information for two Web sites on which STAR data to be verified prior to school API's being calculated will be posted. One site posted by the Educational Planning and Information Center, will include information to verify data related to the number of students tested, student mobility, and subgroups. The second site, posted by the Standards and Assessment Division, will include information related to first-day enrollment, parent exemptions, special education students tested with the alternate assessment, and the number of students with unmatched grade-4 or -7 multiple-choice and writing test scores. Accountability and/or assessment coordinators will receive information about these Web sites and processes for correcting the data by September 6.

District coordinators will submit corrections for first-day enrollment to the Standards and Assessment Division. All other data will be corrected through Harcourt Education Measurement's re-edit process. Districts that chose to correct data are responsible for all costs associated with the corrections.

The last day to notify either the Standards and Assessment Division or Harcourt Educational Measurement that a district will be submitting corrected data files is October 4. Districts will then have until October 18 to submit the corrected data files. No corrections will be accepted after October 18.

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Phil Spears, Division Director

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California Standards Test Reporting

Since raw scores vary from year to year due to changes in the test items, the Department is producing no raw score to scaled score or raw score to performance level tables for the 2002 California Standards Tests (CSTs). District testing directors are asked not to prepare or use such tables within their districts. The only conversion tables that should be used for the CSTs are the scaled score to performance level tables available in the various Reporting 2002 STAR Results packets.

CSTs for each grade and content area are equated from year-to-year using IRT common item equating. Each year the test for each grade and content area is calibrated separately. Linking items (the 50% of the items that are unchanged from one year to the next) are used to convert the estimates for the tests to a common scale. The common scale is used to retain the 300 scaled score as the cut score for basic and the 350 scaled score as the cut score for proficient.

The scaled scores adjust for differences in the difficulty of the tests from year-to-year so that results for the same grade level on the same test can be compared across years. **The scaled scores are designed to serve the needs of California's accountability system, allowing for accurate comparisons of scores in the same content area and same grade level from year-to-year to identify growth in achievement over time.** For example, scaled scores for grade-2 math can be compared only to the scaled scores for grade-2 math.

Since the tests are calibrated independently each year, the lowest and highest scaled score for any given grade and content area may fluctuate from year-to-year. For this reason the scaled score to performance level tables indicate that a score of below basic is a score less than a given scaled score and a score of advanced is a score greater than a given number. There is no meaning attached to a score below or above those printed on the scaled score to performance level tables. Since the number of questions a student needs to answer correctly to achieve a given performance level may vary from year-to-year, there is also no meaning attached to a student's raw score for a test.

The *Reporting 2002 STAR Results to the Media Assistance Packet for Districts* will be available on the CDE Web site by August 30, 2002

Test Preparation Prohibited for the CAT/6

All administrators, coordinators, and teachers are again reminded that California Education Code Section 60611 states, "No city, county, city and county, or district superintendent of schools or principal or teacher of any elementary or secondary school shall carry on any program of specific preparation of the pupils for the statewide pupil assessment program or a particular test used therein."

The State Board of Education issued a policy related to this law in December 2000. The policy is still in effect and provides the following guidance. "A simple way to determine whether a contemplated test preparation procedure is permissible is to ask, 'If the specific test for which I am preparing students were discontinued and a different test of the same type or of a different format were substituted, would my test preparation procedure remain the same or would it change?' If it would remain the same, then it probably is permissible because it is most likely generic preparation for any test or test format rather than for one specific test or format. On the other hand, if that test preparation would change then it probably is not permissible because it is most likely intended to improve achievement on a particular test rather than to teach general test-taking skills."

As schools and/or districts initiate any changes due to the use of the CAT/6 instead of the Stanford 9 as the national norm-referenced achievement test in the STAR Program, they should carefully question why changes are being made. When the California Department of Education (CDE) learns of specific inappropriate test preparation occurring, the Department invalidates the test results for the students who received the test preparation after verifying the allegation. This in turn may invalidate a school's API. CDE does not review any test preparation materials for compliance with EC 60611. Materials may be reviewed and approved for meeting social compliance guidelines. Districts and/or schools are solely responsible for ensuring compliance with 60611.

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For more information about STAR or other state assessments, contact the Standards and Assessment Division of the California Department of Education at (916) 657-3011 (phone), at (916) 657-4964 (fax), at STAR@cde.ca.gov (e-mail), or at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/statetests> (Internet). Your questions will be directed to the appropriate person.

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Administrators and teachers are reminded that the national samples of students to which California students are compared received no preparation for the norm-referenced test. Any focused test preparation for this test will lead to invalid test scores. For scores on the national norm-referenced test to be valid, the tests must be administered under standardized conditions.

CAT/6 and Stanford 9 Equating

The norm-referenced testing (NRT) component of the STAR Program is one component used in calculating the growth Academic Performance Index (API) and the base API for each California school. In 2003, the NRT component of STAR will change from the Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition (Stanford 9) to the California Achievement Tests, Sixth Edition (CAT/6). To ensure that the growth API including the CAT/6 in 2003 is as comparable as possible to the growth API calculated with Stanford 9 in 2003, Educational Testing Service (ETS) will conduct a research study to link Stanford 9 scores to CAT/6 scores. Scores based on these linkings will be used in the calculation of the growth API for each grade/content area in 2003.

The change in NRT components used in calculations of the growth and base API's is just one of a number of changes that are currently underway with the API. For example, in 2002, results of the California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) will become part of the API. The mathematics and history-social science California Standards Tests (CSTs) are being added into the API, and the CSTs will carry the most weight in API calculations. These changes are part of the broader plans to ensure that the California state tests focus instruction on the mastery of state academic content standards.

CDE has approved a linking study design that will yield comparable scores between the Stanford 9 and the CAT/6 to the greatest extent possible. One strength of this linking design is that it will require no additional testing burden on California schools. The study will make use of data from the CSTs to provide a bridge between the Stanford 9 and the CAT/6 tests. The requirement of no additional testing will save the state of California substantial expenses and will require no additional testing for schools and students.

It should be noted that an equating study would have been required to link any NRT designated by the State Board of Education for the 203 to 2005 STAR Program to the Stanford 9, even if the testing contractor had remained the same. With the ETS plan, we are conducting this linking economically and with as little impact on California classrooms as possible.

ETS has assigned a number of nationally recognized testing and measurement experts to design and implement the linking study. In addition, ETS will submit plans for the linking study to outside experts for review. These steps are designed to ensure that the study results in comparable scores to the greatest extent possible. However, all linkings have technical limitations, and ETS and the CDE will ensure that policy makers who work with the API receive information needed for appropriate interpretation of results.

The study design is being reviewed and neither CDE nor ETS is yet ready to discuss or release details related to the study's design. Information about the study design, equating tables that will be generated, and recommendations for reporting and/or using equated results will be distributed to testing directors as they become available during the year. District testing directors should not expect to receive equating tables or information that can be used to produce school or district trend data until August 2003.

Testing Students with Disabilities

The Standards and Assessment Division and Special Education Branch are in the process of reviewing and revising accommodations and modifications for testing students with disabilities to ensure compliance with No Child Left Behind. Information about testing accommodations and modifications is expected to be available during October. Beginning in 2003, all students including students tested with accommodations will be included in school, district, county, and state summary data for both the CAT/6 and the California Standards Tests. IEP teams are reminded that they may only specify *how* children will participate in the state testing program; all students must be participants in the state testing program. The only children exempted from testing are children whose parents/guardians submit written requests to have them exempted from all or any part of the required tests.